Mr. MORGAN's

DEMONSTRATION

THAT

TRUE PHILOSOPHY

HAS NO TENDENCY TO UNDERMINE

DIVINE REVELATION, &c.

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HAS NO TENDENCY TO UNDERMINE

DIVINE REVELATION;

AND THAT

A WELL GROUNDED PHILOSOPHER

MAY BE

A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

By CÆSAR MORGAN, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

TO WHOM THE HONORARY PRIZE WAS ADJUDGED BY TEYLER'S THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AT HAARLEM, APRIL, 1785.

Γυμνάσιον τῆς ψυχῆς ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία, τέλος δὲ ἡ Θεία.

ORIGINES.

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DEMONSTRATION, &c.

IN almoſt every age of the Chriſtian Church there have been men, who have decried the ſtudy of philoſophy as prejudicial to the intereſts of revelation. It is a queſtion of the utmoſt importance, and involves objects of the firſt magnitude, namely, the knowledge of the revealed will of God, and the cultivation of our rational faculties, It deſerves, therefore, our moſt ſerious attention, and is with great wiſdom propoſed as a ſubject for ſevere diſcuſſion. If revelation and philoſophy be indeed at variance with

each other, ſo that the one flouriſhes, in proportion as the other is neglected; it becomes us, with the humility of dependent and ſhort-ſighted beings, to accept the more explicit declarations of our Creator and the unerring dictates of divine wiſdom, rather than deliver ourſelves up to the dictates of our own reaſon, and confide in the deductions and concluſions of our limited underſtandings.—But if it ſhall appear in the ſequel, that divine revelation and true philoſophy are not ſo much at enmity with each other, as ſome men have imagined, or inſinuated: if, in truth, they be eaſily reconcileable with each other, ſo that a man may be at once a ſincere Chriſtian and a well-grounded philoſopher; it is ſurely an innocent, a meritorious employment to endeavour to cultivate to the utmoſt the ſuperior faculties of the mind, and thus to enter, as it were,

were, into the counſels of the all-wiſe and beneficent Creator of the Univerſe, as far as he has placed them within the reach of our capacities.—But if we ſhould advance farther, and perceive, that true philoſophy is the beſt friend of divine revelation; that, humanly ſpeaking, they muſt ſtand and fall together; that philoſophy has a natural tendency to ſtrengthen the underſtanding, and purify the will, to diſſipate the viſions of enthuſiaſm, and diſentangle the ſophiſms of infidelity; we muſt acknowledge the magnanimity, and reverence the exertions, of thoſe men, who have been fully ſenſible of this cloſe connexion between revelation and philoſophy, and have not only availed themſelves of this ſalutary conviction by the cultivation of their own minds, but have endeavoured to diſplay ſo important a truth with all the evidence, of which it is capable,

and to enforce it upon the apprehenſions of others.

Ariſtotle defines philoſophy to be * *the knowledge of truth.* This definition is not ſufficiently full and diſcriminative for the preſent ſubject. Truth is to be attained by both divine revelation and philoſophical reſearches. The object of the Divine and the Philoſopher is the ſame; they differ only in the methods, which they adopt, in order to accompliſh it. I would therefore denominate philoſophy " The diſ-
" covery of truth by a careful attention to
" and inveſtigation of the appearances
" and operations of nature." This definition is, I think, ſufficiently comprehenſive, and at the ſame time clearly diſtinguiſhes the knowledge, that is acquired

* Ὀρθῶς δὲ ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλέσαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας. Ariſtot. Μεταφυς. B. B. K. α.

by

by the ſtudy of philoſophy, from that, which is imparted to us by divine revelation.

If we acknowledge, that the revelation is derived from that God, who firſt framed the Univerſe, and ſtill continues to preſerve it; it ſhould ſeem at firſt ſight, that there could be no oppoſition or inconſiſtency between the works and words of the ſame all-wiſe and infinitely perfect Being; that, on the contrary, there would be found ſuch complete harmony and coincidence between them, that they would reflect light upon each other; and by the mutual ſtrength and ſupport, which they would receive and impart, would unite in forming one complete whole of beauty and excellence. This preſumption appears to be ſo well founded, that, it is probable, the cauſe of revelation would ſuffer materially; if the generality of man-

kind were perſuaded, that the diſpenſations of nature and grace are at variance with each other. In fact, it is upon this ground, that infidelity erects it's ſtrongeſt batteries. Admit but this ſingle principle, and I ſee not, how revelation is to be defended againſt the furiouſneſs of their attacks. But as the caſe really ſtands, we have nothing to apprehend from the mighty preparations and ſounding threats of the adverſaries of our faith—But it is our buſineſs at preſent to plead the cauſe of philoſophy, not of revelation; and to remove the miſtakes of the friends of our holy religion, not to controvert the objections of it's enemies.

In diſputing with the zealous advocates of revelation, no arguments can be inſignificant that are drawn from thoſe inſpired writings, which Chriſtians of all denomi-

denominations profeſs to venerate. Thoſe, therefore, I ſhall firſt produce in order to conciliate the favour of our deluded brethren, and to engage their attention to ſuch, as are derived from a leſs hallowed ſource.

Many Heretics, in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, maintained, that there was an evil principle originally inherent in matter, which the utmoſt efforts of the ſupreme benevolent Being could not entirely eradicate. Nay, they went further, and affirmed, that this world owed it's beginning to the ambitious deſign of ſome rebellious Æon, who confined the pure etherial ſpirit in this corrupted maſs of matter, and formed our earthly globe as a receptacle for the wretched priſoner.— But the account, which Moſes gives us of the creation, is very different. He in-

forms us, that " in the beginning *God* " created the Heaven and the Earth." And to ſhew, that both the materials and the workmanſhip were worthy of their great Creator, he repreſents the Deity as pauſing in the ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages of his work, in order to ſurvey the operations of his hands; and upon every ſuch occaſion it is remarked, that " God ſaw that " it was good." The whole account is at laſt cloſed with this general obſervation: " God ſaw every thing that he had made, " and behold, it was very good."

When the ſtupendous frame of the Univerſe, and every thing contained in it, are exhibited to us as the production of a Being endued with infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power; when it is added, that this work, when completed, was ſanctified by the expreſs approbation of it's divine

divine author: and it is conſidered, that the account is delivered by a perſon, who is acknowledged to have derived his information from that ſupreme and beſt of Beings; it is ſurely a rational deſire in man to wiſh to extend his faculties to the contemplation of this heavenly workmanſhip, and to endeavour to diſcover ſome of thoſe more obvious marks of wiſdom and goodneſs, with which every part of ſo glorious a ſyſtem muſt be replete.

This curioſity, naturally excited by the account, which Moſes has delivered of the Creation, ſo far from being condemned as impious, ſeems to derive no little encouragement from the ſubſequent parts of the ſacred writings.

We may venture to affirm, that no man exceeded David in zeal for the Law

of

of his God; particularly at the times, when he campoſed the Pſalms, thoſe ſublime pieces of devotion and praiſe. Yet he is ſo far from ſuſpecting, that an attention to the works of nature has a tendency to withdraw the minds of men from the contemplation of the great Author of it, and to induce them to reject his revealed will; that he is almoſt continually directing us to obſerve the magnificence, wiſdom, and benevolence, that are conſpicuous throughout the whole creation.

The example of his ſon Solomon is ſtill more directly in favour of the ſtudy of philoſophy. When he preferred wiſdom to long life, riches, and martial glory, and every other bleſſing, which the thoughts of man could deviſe; the ſcripture adds, "The ſpeech pleaſed the Lord, that So-"lomon had aſked this thing." Leſt it

ſhould

ſhould be pretended, that the ſubject of his choice, which thus merited the divine approbation, was the art of government alone; I think it neceſſary to remark, that the nature and extent of the requeſt are beſt explained by the manner, in which it was complied with. It appears in the ſequel of the hiſtory, that he was not only enabled to decide with equity in the caſe of the two harlots, and other intricate matters of government; but alſo, that he was a moſt profound philoſopher in the ſtricteſt meaning of the term. His giving ſatisfactory anſwers to all the hard queſtions, with which the queen of Sheba came to prove him, is a ſufficient manifeſtation of the ſubtilty of his wit. And of the extent of his knowledge it is expreſsly affirmed, that " he ſpake of trees, " from the cedar that is in Lebanon, " even unto the hyſſop that ſpringeth out

" of

" of the wall: he ſpake alſo of beaſts,
" and of fowl, and of creeping things,
" and of fiſhes."

We may here, likewiſe, produce Moſes and St. Paul, as memorable inſtances of the perfect agreement between human and divine learning. They were ſignal inſtruments in the hands of God, for the purpoſe of declaring his will to the world. The character, which St. Stephen gave of Moſes, though ſhort, is highly expreſſive of his intellectual attainments: " Moſes was learned in all the wiſdom " of the Egyptians;" and that at a time, when Egypt was the repoſitory of all the philoſophy then to be found in the world. —Of the learning of St. Paul, his ingenuity, and ſkill in diſputation and argument, no one can entertain a doubt, who peruſes, with an unprejudiced mind and due

due attention, thoſe epiſtles of his, which the Church of Chriſt ſo highly values.

If it would add any weight to the preceding authorities; we might urge the opinion of the emperor Julian, and the Chriſtians of his time. He had conceived an inveterate hatred againſt all, who embraced, and adhered to, the religion of Jeſus; and he appears to have had nothing ſo much at heart, during his ſhort reign, as to exterminate the memorial of it from off the earth. For this purpoſe, he publiſhed * an edict, by which he prohibited Chriſtians from being admitted into ſeminaries of learning; judging, that nothing would more effectually tend to the abolition of our faith, than the ignorance, which would be thus introduced

* Νόμῳ ἐκέλευσε χριστιάνους παιδεύσεως μὴ μετέχειν. Soc. Hiſt. L. III. 10.

among

among it's profeſſors. In this light the meaſure was beheld by the whole body of Chriſtians; and if the edict had continued long in force, and been rigidly executed; it is probable, that our religion would have ſuffered more from that, than from every other ſpecies of oppreſſion, to which it had been expoſed.

Let us now proceed to conſider the queſtion more at large, and to decide upon it by it's own apparent merits, independent of authority.

I can conceive but three reaſons, that can be aſſigned, why Philoſophy ſhould have a tendency to undermine divine Revelation: Firſt, that the principles of Revelation and Philoſophy are inconſiſtent with each other: Or Secondly, that the very act of inveſtigation is apt to produce doubt

doubt and uncertainty: Or Thirdly, that knowledge itſelf has, in it's own nature, a tendency to introduce unbelief. When theſe three reaſons have been thoroughly examined; I truſt, we ſhall find little difficulty in determining the queſtion. After which it may be uſeful, in the Fourth place, to mention ſome of the principle cauſes, that have, in different times and circumſtances, actually given riſe to the opinion, that the purſuit of Philoſophy is prejudicial to the intereſts of Revelation.

I. When the name of Philoſophy was diſgraced by the ſubtilties of ſcholaſtic diſputation; the votaries of that profound ſcience often found themſelves embarraſſed by the inconſiſtency, that evidently appeared between the concluſions of their philoſophic reaſoning and the expreſs declarations

clarations of holy writ. Heated by the violence of controverſy, and ſtrongly attached to their own refinements, they could not prevail upon themſelves to renounce opinions, which had coſt them ſo much time and labour; or even to call in queſtion a chain of argumentation, that diſplayed, as they imagined, the ingenuity and acuteneſs of their minds. To ſave the credit of their ſpeculations, and at the ſame time to avoid a direct attack upon the eſtabliſhed religion of Europe, they adopted a mode of expreſſion, as repugnant to common ſenſe, as derogatory to Chriſtianity, *that a thing was philoſophically, but not religiouſly true:* as if truth and falſehood were convertible terms, or the operations of nature and the words of God were in oppoſition to each other.

Conſiſtency

Conſiſtency of conduct, and invariable harmony and connexion in the plan of his works, are the neceſſary conſequences of the infinite wiſdom, that is inherent in the Deity. Whatever fluctuation and uncertainty appear in the proceedings of any creatures, ariſe from the limitation of their faculties. Things aſſume different appearances, when beheld at different diſtances, and under different points of view. On this account, what is one day purſued as wiſe and beneficial, may the next be rejected as abſurd and pernicious. But this can never happen to the Deity, who ſees through all time, and pervades all ſpace; who comprehends equally the whole, and the moſt minute parts, of the univerſal world, with all their various arrangements and mutual influences; and perceives at once the moſt diſtant conſequences of every regulation.

It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that ſuch a Being would act upon different principles in the material and the religious world, and conſtitute his kingdoms of nature and grace at enmity with each other.

But admitting, that a real conſiſteney and harmony ſubſiſt between all the works of God; it may be aſſerted, that our minds are ſo conſtituted, as not to be able to comprehend them.—To this it may be anſwered, that there now are, and have been in moſt ages of the world, numberleſs individuals, tribes, and nations, to whom God has not vouchſafed an expreſs declaration of his will. To all ſuch, an attentive contemplation of the viſible creation is the only means, which his providence has afforded, of acquiring information upon that moſt important ſubject. Now, as goodneſs is as eſſential to God,

God, as wiſdom; it is little leſs than impiety to affirm, that he has left millions of his creatures to the guidance of their own minds, and yet has ſo ordained things, that, while they endeavour, by a right uſe of their faculties, to arrive at ſome knowledge of him and his laws, they will infallibly be miſled, and conducted to all error.

The ſentiments of the inſpired Pſalmiſt were very different. In the 104th Pſalm, while he is enumerating the many wonders of nature, which every where preſent themſelves; he breaks off with a ſudden exclamation of aſtoniſhment and rapture: "O Lord, how manifold are thy "works! In wiſdom haſt thou made them "all: the earth is full of thy riches."— St. Paul has expreſſed himſelf ſo fully upon this ſubject, in the firſt chapter of his

epiſtle to the Romans, as to have left no room for evaſion or ſubterfuge. He tells them, that " the wrath of God is revealed " from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and " unrighteouſneſs of men; becauſe that, " which may be known of God, is ma- " nifeſt in them; *for God hath ſhewed it* " *unto them. For the inviſible things of him* " *from the creation of the world are clearly* " *ſeen, being underſtood by the things that* " *are made, even his eternal power and God-* " *head.*"

Both the Pſalmiſt and St. Paul ſeem to think a ſlight view of the operations of nature ſufficient to inſpire men with exalted ideas of the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of God, conformable to the repreſentations, that are always made of him, in the holy ſcriptures. But we need not be afraid to penetrate beyond the ſurface;

face, and to examine the texture of thoſe works, which bear the external marks of beauty, order, and beneficence. The fountain of divine wiſdom is inexhauſtible, and his bounty infinite. The deeper we ſearch; the greater reaſon we ſhall have to admire, to venerate, and to love the author of our being, and of every thing, that ſurrounds us; and, of courſe, the ſtronger reſemblance we ſhall find of Jehovah, the Lord almighty, " whoſe " mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and " his faithfulneſs unto the clouds: whoſe " righteouſneſs ſtandeth like the ſtrong " mountains, and his judgements like the " great deep." Pſ. xxxvi. 5. 6.

The moſt uninformed of the human ſpecies cannot look up to the heavens, and behold the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, without being ſenſible of the beauty of

the appearance, and acknowledging, that the hand, which created them, is divine. But this pleaſure muſt be more rational and manly, and this conviction muſt ſink deeper into the mind of the philoſopher, who examines them with a curious eye, obſerving the wiſdom of their conformation and poſitions; and calculates the laws, by which the planets are preſerved in their orbits, ever revolving about the ſun, which, as an expreſſive emblem of it's maker, diffuſes light and heat, fertility and life, through the wide range of it's ſyſtem. But when he extends his obſervations ſtill farther, and conſiders the fixed ſtars as ſo many ſuns, each the center of it's own ſyſtem, at inconceivable diſtances from each other and from us; his mind is filled with the immenſity of the Deity, and is thoroughly ſatisfied of the truth of the declaration of Iſaiah, that,

" as

" as the heavens are higher than the " earth, ſo are God's ways higher than " our ways, and his thoughts than our " thoughts." Iſaiah lv. 9.

Nor will he be more inclined to doubt of the character, which the ſcriptures uniformly attribute to the Deity; when his thoughts deſcend to the earth, and the inhabitants of it. Every thing here is impreſſed with ſtrong marks of the divine agency, government, and providence. Whether he conſiders the conſtruction of each particular being, or the general arrangement of the whole; all is wonderful in it's kind. Not one of the moſt inferior animals, not an inſect, or reptile, or even a blade of graſs, but is formed with the moſt exquiſite ſkill, and the ſame wiſe diſpoſition, that is conſpi-

cuous in the moſt exalted of the works of God.

But in a minute enquiry into the nature of things, we are particularly led to admire that ample proviſion, which God has made for the preſervation and happineſs of all his creatures. He has diſpenſed to all animated beings various powers of enjoyment, and has profuſely ſcattered around objects ſuited to thoſe powers. Nor has he left the diſcovery of them to chance; but has implanted in each it's reſpective inſtinct, in a manner forcibly to impel them to refuſe the evil, and chuſe the good; thus inconteſtably evincing, that "the Lord is gracious "unto all, and his tender mercies are "over all his works." Pſ. cxlv. 9.

But the rational Philoſopher will fix his attention principally upon his own ſpecies. In that he is moſt nearly intereſted; and, while he is carefully inveſtigating it's nature, powers, and qualities, he will find in them every thing, that can raiſe his admiration, gratitude, and love, all concurring to confirm the ſcriptural account of the creation and redemption of mankind.

The ſupremacy, with which we are inveſted over all the creatures of God in this lower world, is a peculiar indication of the divine favour. The care, that is taken to combine the felicity and perfection of the individual with that of the ſpecies, and to make a man happy, in proportion to the bleſſings, which he beſtows upon others, is a ſtrong mark of the benevolent diſpoſition of the Univerſal Parent.

Parent. A ſurvey of the underſtanding of man, of his perception, memory, and reaſon, and all the other faculties of his mind, by which he is enabled to decide upon the preſent, to recall the paſt, and to form probable concluſions with reſpect to the future, prepare us to admit, without heſitation, the account of Moſes, that he was originally made in the image of God.

Nor ſhall we find it a dangerous or an unprofitable taſk; if we advance farther, and peruſe the works of the moſt admired ſages of antiquity. Many of them may be juſtly entitled candid and laborious inveſtigators of truth. They compared, compounded, and abſtracted their ideas with preciſion and acuteneſs. Yet their moſt profound reſearches, whatever ingenuity they diſplayed, were ſeldom productive

ductive of rational conviction in the main objects of their enquiry. They could detect the falſe reaſoning, and expoſe the abſurd and contradictory poſitions of others, with great penetration and humour. But in attempting to eſtabliſh their own opinions, they equally ſubjected themſelves to the cenſure or ridicule of their adverſaries.

A minute and philoſophical enquiry into the paſſions and affections of the mind will alſo furniſh much matter, worthy of obſervation, and far from militating againſt the principles of Revelation. It will appear, that, in their natural ſtate, they were intended rather to incite us to action, than to direct us in our conduct. They were implanted in us, to awaken the attention, to rouſe the latent powers of the ſoul, and to inſtigate, or entice, us

to

to embark in all the duties of ſocial and active life. When this taſk is executed; the buſineſs then devolves to the ſuperior faculty of the underſtanding, to whoſe guidance and controul they ſhould ſubmit. It is the province of the intellectual powers alone to determine, whether the notice, given by the paſſions, deſerves attention, and to what extent. When we ſubmit our actions to the ſcrutiny of reaſon, and obey it's dictates: when, in compliance with it, we confine our paſſions within the limits of temperance, juſtice, and brotherly love; we obtain, in the regular courſe of things, all thoſe bleſſings, that are beſt ſuited to our nature and ſituation, health of body, and peace, and vigour of mind, with the approbation, encouragement, and aſſiſtance of the wiſe and good.

Yet,

Yet when we look into the actual condition of mankind; we ſhall find this natural ſtate of the mind almoſt entirely ſubverted; diſorder and confuſion introduced into the nobleſt of the works of God, and miſery apparently entailed upon the whole human ſpecies, by the abuſe of their greateſt privileges. Inſtead of the paſſions being ſubjected to reaſon, we almoſt always ſee them aſſert an uncontroulable dominion over it. Not only in caſes, in which the ſenſes are immediately affected, but even in the moſt abſtruſe ſpeculations, they are often known to exerciſe an undue influence. Hope and fear, vanity and ſhame, inſinuate themſelves into our minds in the moſt artful diſguiſes, biaſs our judgments in our cooleſt moments, and induce us to embrace the moſt glaring abſurdities with the moſt cordial ſatisfaction.—But if the

paſſions

paſſions have clandeſtinely obtained admiſſion into the cloſet of the ſage; in the world at large they have eſtabliſhed a viſible empire, and exerciſe an unlimited dominion. In vain are the young forewarned of the evils, which inevitably ariſe from too free an indulgence of their ſenſual appetites. Neither the admonitions of the aged, the example of their companions, nor their own experience, can reſtrain their intemperate ardour. In vain are men of more advanced years admoniſhed of the inſtability of human honours, and the inſufficiency of human greatneſs to promote the eſſential happineſs of life. They hear with indifference the complaints of thoſe, who went before them in the paths of ambition. From age to age, the ſame follies and vices are committed, and the ſame calamities enſue.

Thus

Thus does philoſophy ſhew us, that the inanimate world proceeds with the utmoſt regularity and order, and appears completely to anſwer the wiſe deſigns of it's Creator: that irrational animals uniformly obey the unerring dictates of their inſtincts, and by thoſe means ſeldom fail of obtaining the whole of the happineſs, which Providence has deſigned for them: but that man alone, upon whom the divine Being has laviſhed his bleſſings with an unſparing hand, is rendered miſerable, in proportion as he is ſuperior to the other inhabitants of this terreſtrial globe. His reaſon involves him in perpetual error; and his freedom of will, the peculiar and ineſtimable privilege of intelligent beings, by enabling him to gratify his moſt wayward paſſions, plunges him into the moſt complicated diſtreſs. The natural man is confounded at this appearance of

things, and knows not, whither to recur for an explanation. But when the ſacred volume is opened, and the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents and it's conſequences are attended to; the obſcurity inſtantly vaniſhes. It is readily admitted, that man is not in the ſtate, for which he was originally deſigned by his Creator; and the fundamental article of divine revelation obtains an eaſy and rational aſſent.

The arguments which philoſophy adduces in ſupport of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, are ſo numerous and convincing, and have been ſo often enforced by the beſt writers of all ages, countries, and religions; that I ſhall forbear to dwell upon them, and proceed to conſider, whether the concluſions, that may be drawn from the regular courſe of nature

nature and the viſible creation, be not conformable to that grand ſcheme of Redemption, which is diſplayed in the holy Scriptures.

Vice is productive of certain conſequences, highly expreſſive of the diſpleaſure of God. It naturally tends to enfeeble and to entail pains and diſeaſes upon the body. It likewiſe debaſes, and depraves the moral ſentiments, and introduces diſorder and anarchy into the mind. Yet it has pleaſed the divine goodneſs to furniſh the world in great abundance with ſpecific remedies for almoſt every diſtemper, to which the human frame is liable from an intemperate indulgence of the paſſions. Nothing in general ſeems neceſſary to correct thoſe evils, but a timely and proper application of the remedy, and a more rigid attention to regularity and temperance for the fu-

ture. When we perceive our heavenly father thus careful for the bodies of men, the right temperature of which can affect their happineſs in this life alone, and that only in a ſubordinate degree; the preſumption is ſtrong, that he will extend at leaſt an equal ſhare of his regard to that ſpiritual and immortal part, which will ſurvive the diſſolution of the body, and of the world which it inhabits. The mind of a true philoſopher will with little difficulty be prevailed upon to believe, that the ſupreme Being, who has made ſuch abundant proviſion for the earthly and periſhable part of our nature, will not wholly neglect the intellectual and moral part, the right government and improvement of which appear to have been the principal ends of our creation. He will acknowledge, that it ſeems wholly unaccountable to him, that the all-

wiſe

wiſe and omnipotent God ſhould in vain beſtow ſuch invaluable qualities upon his creatures; and, as far as his narrow capacity can comprehend, it will ſeem more likely to redound to the honour of God to reclaim ſinners from the error of their ways, to enlighten their underſtandings, and purify their affections, than to rectify any diſorders, that may unhinge their mortal frames.

Theſe previous reflections are admirable preparatives for the reception of the great ſcheme of Redemption, which the Goſpel diſplays. The man, who with a truly philoſophic ſpirit thus enters into the principles of things, will find the Goſpel Diſpenſation perfectly congenial to his mind. It is true, moſt of the circumſtances of it will infinitely ſurpaſs his conception. But thoſe are calculated rather to increaſe his awe, gratitude, and admira-

tion, than to undermine his faith, or confirm him in infidelity. He will be particularly ſtruck with the affecting occaſion, upon which that diſpenſation was at firſt introduced; and the ſolemn manner, in which it was announced; the many ages, that preceded it's full accompliſhment; and the great preparations, that were made to render it effectual. The occaſional communications to the Patriarchs; the intermediate eſtabliſhment of the theocratic polity of the Jews; the continued chain of propheey, tending more and more to illuſtrate the great event, to which every other part of the diſpenſation referred, as the time of it's accompliſhment drew nigh; and laſtly, the dignity of the perſon, whoſe coming was thus prefigured; and the ſtupendous manner, in which the ſcene was cloſed, are ſo far from contradicting the principles of philoſophy, that they ſupply every

circum-

circumſtance, which is neceſſary to afford the mind complete ſatisfaction on the moſt important points. The whole is an auguſt and intereſting diſplay of the wiſdom, purity, and loving-kindneſs of God; and is an alarming indication of the pernicious effects of ſin, which introduced ſuch diſorder and confuſion into the world, as required ſo aſtoniſhing a proceſs to counteract.

From what has been ſaid, I think, we may venture to conclude, that there is no natural inconſiſtency between divine Revelation and true Philoſophy. There appears to be a perfect harmony and correſpondence between all the works of God. If there be in reality any oppoſition; it muſt be ſought rather in the effects, than in the principles—Thoſe effects may be reduced to two claſſes:

firſt, ſuch, as are produced in the mind by the purſuit of philoſophical knowledge: or ſecondly, thoſe, which ariſe from the actual poſſeſſion of it.

II. With reſpect to the firſt claſs, or the ſecond part of this diſquiſition, the obſervation of Ariſtotle deſerves to be attended to, that * " other animals are " ſwayed by the perception of preſent and " the remembrance of paſt impreſſions " upon the ſenſes; but that mankind has " ſuperadded to theſe art and reaſoning." This indeed is the real diſtinction between irrational and rational animals. The preſent queſtion relates to the proper exerciſe of that faculty, which diſtinguiſhes us from the brutes. I preſume, the jea-

* Τὰ μὲν ἓν ἄλλα ταῖς φαντασίαις ζῇ καὶ ταῖς μνήμαις, ἐμπειρίας δὲ μετέχει μικρὸν. Τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος καὶ τέχνῃ καὶ λογισμοῖς. Ariſt. Μεταφυς. B. α. K. α.

lous advocates of Revelation would not abſolutely proſcribe all uſe of reaſoning, but ſuch a degree of it only, as conſtitutes a philoſopher. It will, therefore, be previouſly neceſſary to determine, what that is.

* " Thoſe, who only learn and practiſe eſtabliſhed rules in any ſcience or art whatſoever, may be called the people: thoſe, who examine and reform thoſe rules, diveſting themſelves of prejudice, are philoſophers." If this definition is to be depended upon; it is evident, that the queſtion concerning the lawfulneſs and expediency of philoſophical reſearches is, whether it be allowed us to enquire into the nature and ground of our opinions and principles; or whether we

* Hey's Heads of Theological Lectures delivered in the Univerſity of Cambridge.

muſt not deliver ourſelves up, in many of the moſt important concerns of life, to the tyranny of cuſtom, and be conſtrained blindly to adopt, what our predeceſſors in ſcience have thought fit to eſtabliſh. If the rules and maxims, which are handed down from antiquity, be the effects of chance; we, ſurely, diſgrace our reaſon by ſubmitting to them without examination. If they be the reſult of ſevere inveſtigation; they are a juſtification and encouragement to us to proceed in the ſame courſe. By admitting the utility of the concluſions, we bear the moſt favourable teſtimony to the methods, which led to them. By adopting them in our practice, we acknowledge ourſelves indebted to thoſe, by whoſe labours they were inveſtigated. Why then ſhould we ignobly reſt ſatisfied with the fund, that others have laid up for us? Why ſhould we

not

not rather exert our own endeavours, and, by acquiring a freſh ſtock of materials, unite with thoſe, who have gone before us, in the laudable work of increaſing the wiſdom and happineſs of the preſent and future ages. The ſame means are certainly as allowable for us, as for them. We ſhall be the rather excited to this; when we reflect, that, whatever genius and induſtry they employed in this undertaking, they were ſtill liable to error. An equal or even a leſs degree of attention on our part may enable us to correct many of thoſe miſtakes, which a partial overſight, or human infirmity, in the philoſophers of former ages may have produced; or we may by the aſſiſtance of their labours advance farther, than it was poſſible for them to do, who were leſs favoured by the diſcoveries of preceding enquirers.

Let

Let us conſider for a moment, what would have been the conſequence, if philoſophical reſearches had been ſuppreſſed in every age of the world. It would effectually have prevented all our boaſted advancements in ſcience and civilization. Chance exhibits it's diſcoveries ſingly and at very diſtant intervals, ſcanty and ill-flavoured as the natural produce of the earth. But the fruits of philoſophy are in rich and luxuriant cluſters; like the productions of the ſame earth, when cultivated by the hand of man, and fertilized by the ſkilful mixture of ſuitable manures — Beſides, every diſcovery, that has been accidentally hit upon, has required great attention and thought to accommodate it to the various purpoſes of human life, and to draw from it thoſe beneficial effects, which, with proper management, it is capable of producing.

To counterbalance this, it has been ſaid, that, without theſe boaſted improvements and their correſpondent influence on the mind, we ſhould approach nearer to a ſtate of primeval ſimplicity. Unſeduced by the arts of ſophiſtry, we ſhould be ſuſceptible of the charms of unadorned truth; and embrace it with ſincerity, without any attempt or deſire to prevaricate or evade it's force.—This is the language of poetry, not of religion. Philoſophy is the genuine friend of truth, it's ſtrenuous aſſertor and defender; as, without it, the conception of the mind is narrow, and it's faculties dull and ſluggiſh.

Without the aid of philoſophy and a habit of inveſtigation and thought, the mind with great difficulty admits any combinations of ideas, which are not introduced

troduced into it by the immediate intervention of the ſenſes, or which do not bear a cloſe relation to ſuch, as are thus introduced. Not only general and abſtract terms, but even purely ſpiritual ideas, ſeem to exceed the capacity of uncultivated minds. Thoſe men, who have been employed in the converſion of ſavage nations, and who have been ſincere and zealous in the diſcharge of their office, have been fully ſenſible of the great diſadvantages, under which they have laboured from this ſingle circumſtance. The minds of thoſe, with whom they were concerned, had not been ſufficiently cultivated for the reception of new combinations of ideas, remote from their former habits of thinking. If they rejected the communications of divine knowledge, that was tendered to them; they did it with a ſenſeleſs obſtinacy, which ſhewed,

ſhewed, not only that they underſtood neither the excellence of the doctrine, nor the ſtrength of the evidence, upon which it is founded; but alſo, that they were totally incapable of entering upon a rational inveſtigation of thoſe important points. If they were content to ſubmit to be baptized, and were even deſirous of being admitted into the boſom of the Church; it was apparent, that their conduct proceeded not from conviction, but from curioſity, from a naturally complying diſpoſition, that eaſily yields to exhortations and entreaties, or from a perſonal reſpect for the preacher. Even when they had learned to repeat the forms preſcribed to them, and to explain them in approved terms; it was evident, that they either annexed no ideas at all to the words, or that they apprehended them in a ſenſe very different from their genuine ſignification.

ſignification. The ſame deſcription is applicable, though in a leſs degree, to the uneducated part of the moſt civilized nations.

There may be teachers, who admire this tractable and ſubmiſſive diſpoſition in the people, whom they are commiſſioned to inſtruct. They may, with great exultation, contraſt it with diſputative and contentious philoſophy; which profeſſes to examine the nature and authority of every doctrine, propoſed to it, with the niceſt ſcrutiny; and withholds it's aſſent, till it can give it upon rational conviction. —To ſuch I would reply, that the temper, which they recommend, is not that, which the Goſpel ſpeaks of with the higheſt approbation. In the Holy Scriptures, the reaſon of men is perpetually appealed to; and thoſe are repreſented in the moſt favourable

favourable light, who moſt readily admit of the appeal, and enter into the enquiry with the greateſt earneſtneſs and attention. It is this conduct alone, that can make us worthy worſhippers of an infinitely intelligent Being. By admitting the divine origin of a religion upon the unſupported teſtimony of man, we may claim merit with that man, to whoſe authority we thus ſubmit. But, by entering into a previous examination of it's principles, doctrines, and authority, by a free and impartial exerciſe of our reaſon, we approve ourſelves the faithful ſervants of God, who gave us that reaſon, to be the guide of our conduct, and to enable us to decide ultimately upon the truth and falſhood of every propoſition, that is preſented to our minds. Even our bleſſed Saviour himſelf condeſcended to appeal to the reaſon of men upon every occaſion,

and

and claimed aſſent from his followers no farther, than the evidences, which he produced in ſupport of his miſſion, would carry them.

Indeed, when we have to deal with men, who are incapable of examining the foundations of our faith, and of judging of it's truth and excellence; our firſt buſineſs is to perſuade them, that we are ourſelves qualified to diſcern the value of thoſe things; that we are really convinced of the truth of them; and that we are actuated by an ardent deſire of their happineſs. After this preparation, it is our duty to lay before them the doctrines of the Goſpel with all poſſible plainneſs and perſpicuity. This is appealing to their reaſon, as far as it is capable of directing them. But the neceſſity of reſorting to this expedient is an indiſputable proof of the

the great benefit of philoſophy, which enables us to judge for ourſelves in things, that ſo highly concern us; ſince men, thus conſtrained implicitly to truſt to the guidance of others, are expoſed to the hypocritical artifices of every impoſtor.

When the right of appeal to reaſon in any caſe is once admitted; the innocence of philoſophy is eſtabliſhed by the ſame conceſſion. An acknowledgment of the propriety of an act is a ſufficient acknowledgment of the propriety of the means, eſſentially neceſſary to the due performance of that act. If, therefore, we may uſe our reaſon to enquire into the truth and excellence of any thing; it is equally allowable to examine into the nature of reaſon itſelf, and the proper methods of improving it. For this purpoſe, it will be of infinite importance to analyze the

mind, and reduce it to it's firſt principles; to inſpect it's ſimpleſt faculties in their ſimpleſt operations; to obſerve, how it acquires it's ideas; how it combines them, when acquired; and in what manner it is liable to be impoſed upon by falſe appearances. By theſe means, a man will be able to form a tolerably juſt conception of the objects and extent of human knowledge. He will perceive, what ſubjects naturally lie within the reach of his faculties; and to what degree of certainty he may hope to arrive in the courſe of his enquiries. Hence he will learn to confine himſelf to ſuch purſuits, as his powers are capable of accompliſhing; and to be ſatisfied with that evidence, which the nature of things is fitted to ſupply to a being of his limited capacity. This is the only effectual method of ſecuring himſelf from preſumption on one

hand

hand and credulity on the other; from plunging without a guide into the vaſt expanſe of being, or from tamely acquieſcing in every device of artful impoſture. All this is the peculiar employment of true philoſophy.

The value of all knowledge conſiſts chiefly in it's being reduced to practice, and rendered ſubſervient to the benefit of it's poſſeſſor. Thus, however accurate our view of the human underſtanding may be; it will be very inſignificant, if nothing more be intended by it than the gratification of an idle curioſity. But the true philoſopher will be anxious to apply it, in it's full extent, to moral purpoſes. Being ſatisfied, that the underſtanding is the moſt excellent part of man, he will think it deſerving his particular attention. As ideas are the immediate objects, upon

which the mind exerciſes all it's faculties, and by means of which it performs all it's operations; his firſt enquiry will be, Whence are they derived? Finding, that they are procured either by obſerving, what paſſes in the world around, or by attending to the motions of the mind itſelf; he will endeavour by both thoſe methods to encreaſe the ſtock of his materials. Every man, who ſteadily perſeveres in this courſe, will ſoon be ſenſible of the beneficial effects of it; without taking into conſideration the advantages of that fund of knowledge, which he is thus laying up; for I wiſh to confine myſelf at preſent to the influence, which the act itſelf has upon the mind.

The firſt of thoſe effects, which this habitual practice will produce in the mind, will be a ſuperior degree of activity.

There

There is a great reſemblance between the mind and the body in this, as well as in many other particulars. By indolence and inactivity they become feeble and ſluggiſh, averſe from ſpirited exertions, and incapable of a continuance of labour; but regular exerciſe enlivens, and invigorates both.

The excellence of philoſophy in this particular cannot be better illuſtrated, than by attending to the circumſtances of ſavage nations. Notwithſtanding the aſtoniſhing ſagacity and quickneſs of apprehenſion, which they diſcover in their peculiar occupations of hunting and war; ſome ſuperficial obſervers have attempted to degrade them to a rank in the ſcale of intelligence, inferior to that, which is poſſeſſed by the civilized inhabitants of the world. They cannot conceive, that

a native of the woods of America, the vacancy of whoſe mind is ſo well expreſſed by the unmeaning air of his countenance, can partake, in all reſpects, of the ſame nature, as the refined wits of Europe. He ſeems to differ little from the dog, that ſlumbers beſide him; except, when his thoughts are employed in planning, or executing ſome military expedition, or in dexterouſly deceiving animals of chaſe. If we exclude the particular ſets of ideas, that belong to thoſe two purſuits; he can hardly be ſaid to intereſt himſelf in any thing. Talk to him of the wonders of art and nature, and he liſtens with a ſtupid inſenſibility. Whilſt he is ſcarcely able to ſupport the languor of a thoughtleſs exiſtence; a thouſand and ten thouſand objects, calculated to excite, and gratify a rational curioſity, to exerciſe, and improve his ingenuity, and to

 remove

remove his wants, continually ſurround him, without attracting the leaſt of his notice. Yet this being is indiſputably born with the ſame natural faculties, as a Bacon or a Newton, a Linnæus or a Haller. It is philoſophy alone, that has placed them at ſo immenſe a diſtance. It is to it's enlivening influence, that the latter are indebted for that intenſe vigour and unwearied application of mind, which furniſh them with employment, and conſtrain their attention, in every poſſible circumſtance and ſituation; and it is owing to the want of philoſophic culture, that the ſavage dozes away his life in a torpid and unthinking ſtate.

It would be an inſult to common ſenſe to pretend to doubt for a moment, which of theſe characters is beſt prepared for the reception of divine truths. The ſa-

vage receives them careleſsly, hears them with indifference, apprehends them confuſedly, and ſuffers them to be ſoon obliterated from his mind. The philoſopher liſtens to them attentively, weighs them deliberately, comprehends them accurately, and lays them up with care in that great ſtorehouſe of his ideas, his memory.

I have here taken the extremes of philoſophy and uncultivated nature; that the effects of each ſtate may appear the more conſpicuous and ſtriking. But I am perſuaded, that, in every intermediate ſtate, the effects will be ſimilar, in proportion to it's diſtance from each of the extremes.

Perhaps, a well-applied fact will carry more conviction with it, than general reaſoning.—In St. Paul's time, human philoſophy

loſophy was in high repute. In no period of the world does it appear to have been more generally cultivated, particularly in Greece and the leſſer Aſia, the countries, that were the principal ſcenes of the miniſtry of that great Apoſtle. His reception and ſucceſs among thoſe nations of philoſophers are worth attending to. No ſooner did he open his extraordinary commiſſion; but he was ſurrounded by crowds of hearers, who, both by ſound reaſoning and an impartial examination of the Scriptures, endeavoured to diſcover the truth of what he affirmed. The reſult was, what it ever will be, when the authority of divine revelation is expoſed to the ſcrutiny of men of active and vigorous underſtandings: multitudes both of men and women daily flocked into the Church of Chriſt.—Let any one take a view of thoſe once enlightened countries, and ſay, whether

ther he thinks, that, in their preſent ſtate of ignorance and barbariſm, of obſtinacy and credulity, they are equally fitted for the reception and preſervation of our holy religion? It is impoſſible to doubt, what anſwer every rational man muſt give to ſo eaſy a queſtion.

I ſhall proceed, therefore, in the next place, to ſhew, that the ſtudy of true Philoſophy is beneficial to divine Revelation, by improving the ſagacity of the mind, and ſtrengthening the judgement.

Much ingenuity has been uſefully employed in proving, that particular ſtudies are calculated to ſupply particular defects, or to correct particular redundances, of the mind. "Pure mathematicks," ſays Lord Chancellor Bacon, "remedy and

"cure

" cure many defects in the wit and facul-
" ties intellectual. For if the wit be too
" dull, they ſharpen it; if too wandering,
" they fix it; if too inherent in the ſenſe,
" they abſtract it." Theſe, or other equally valuable effects, may be ſhewn to proceed from every other ſcience, that is comprehended under the general term of Philoſophy. They all require great induſtry in collecting ideas, great attention in diſtinguiſhing them, great care in laying them up, great quickneſs in calling them forth for uſe, and great dexterity in the application of them to the purpoſes of life and manners. But what I would moſt inſiſt upon in the preſent argument, is the ineſtimable advantage, which philoſophy imparts to the mind, by improving it's natural power of diſtinguiſhing truth from falſhood, and thus ſecuring it from error and impoſture.

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The eaſe, with which the uneducated multitude is deceived in all ſpeculative points, is a matter of concern to every good man. It aſtoniſhes many, who, by means of an early and liberal education, have imbibed a conſiderable portion of knowledge, and have acquired a habit of thinking, and judging of things, by imperceptible degrees. They do not conſider, by what means they have attained to this excellence of mind. The facility, with which they exerciſe it, inclines them to believe it natural; and when they find others deſtitute of the ſame quickneſs of apprehenſion and compaſs of thought, they attribute it to a native dulneſs and narrowneſs of conception. Nothing has tended more to depreciate the merits, and obſcure the luſtre, of philoſophy, than the want of clear ideas upon this ſubject.

A philo-

A philoſopher, in whatever formidable light he may be ſeen by the ignorant or ſuperſtitious, is nothing more than one, who has improved his reaſon in a degree ſuperior to that of his fellow-citizens. His object is knowledge; and he purſues it in the manner, which experience approves, as the moſt effectual for attaining it. This is done, in ſome degree, by every inhabitant of a civilized country. Even the labourer and mechanic learn to reaſon upon the objects, about which they are moſt converſant. The man of a liberal education extends the ſphere of his ſpeculations farther, and familiarizes his thoughts to the contemplation of many truths, that are incomprehenſible to the vulgar. The philoſopher differs from theſe in degree, not in kind. He ſearches deeper into the nature of things, is more abſtracted in his ideas, more nice in his diſtinctions,

diſtinctions, more accurate in his examination of propoſitions, and more rigid in his deductions.

One of the eſſential properties of philoſophy is, that it introduces a ſerious and ſteady inveſtigation of truth. It admits no premiſes, that are not ſelf-evident; and allows of no concluſions, that do not clearly follow from the preceding parts of the argument. To attain this end, the philoſopher proceeds with the utmoſt caution, and ſubjects all his reaſonings to the ſevereſt ſcrutiny. However plauſible an argument may ſeem at firſt ſight, he is not ſatisfied with the general appearance of it. He rigidly canvaſſes the terms, in which it is couched; and jealouſly guards againſt an equivocal application of them. He places the argument itſelf in every light, that his ingenuity

genuity can ſuggeſt; and inſpects it, with the moſt minute attention, in every ſhape, that it can poſſibly aſſume. He conſiders it in the whole and in parts. He traces it from it's principles to it's concluſion, and from it's concluſion to it's principles. When he is ſatisfied with the truth of the premiſes; he proceeds leiſurely, and ſtep by ſtep, through the ſeveral parts of the deduction. He is clear in one propoſition, before he advances to the next; and examines, ſeparately, the connexion and dependence of each upon the other. Having obſerved, whether every ſingle propoſition flows eaſily and naturally from the preceding one, he is better prepared to weigh the general concluſion ariſing from the whole.

Great as this care may ſeem, and effectual as it may be thought for the detection

tection of error; the true philoſopher is not yet ſatisfied. He puſhes farther, and purſues this ſuppoſed truth through all it's conſequences. He is conſcious, that, notwithſtanding all his caution, there may be ſome ambiguity in the expreſſion, or ſome minute error in the premiſes or deduction, which may have eſcaped his notice. For this reaſon he tries it by the beſt eſtabliſhed truths, that have the neareſt affinity to it. If he find any oppoſition or inconſiſtency there; he renews his labour, and redoubles his diligence and attention, till by a more ſucceſsful inveſtigation he diſcover the latent error.

A habit of enquiry, conducted in this manner and upon theſe principles, ſtrengthens the faculties of the mind, and quickens it's penetration to ſo great a degree, as to enable it, upon moſt occaſions,

occaſions, to diſcern the moſt minute differences of things with the niceſt accuracy. But this is not the only advantage, that is derived from a habit of philoſophical inveſtigation. A readineſs in dividing an argument into diſtinct propoſitions greatly diminiſhes the difficulty of the taſk; and thus, while a philoſopher is endued with greater penetration than other men, he ſtands in need of leſs, on account of the ſuperior ſkill, with which he enters upon his work.

To this we may add the caution, that is eminently conſpicuous in the conduct of a true philoſopher. The conſequences of opinions, apparently the moſt inſignificant, can never be known with certainty, till they have been ſubjected to an adequate examination. Much error and much miſery have ariſen in the world

from the ſupineneſs or temerity of incurious or unphiloſophical men. As they are ſenſible of their want of ſkill in inſtituting an inveſtigation, and their want of penetration in executing it; they are always averſe from engaging in an undertaking, that would be attended with ſo much labour and difficulty. The conſequences of an opinion muſt be obviouſly very important, before they can be induced to enter upon a ſerious diſcuſſion of it. They are, therefore, content in general to take up their opinions at hazard, to the great detriment of truth, and the diſgrace of human reaſon.—But the true philoſopher has not ſuch reluctance. The act of inveſtigation is ſo habitual to him, as to become eaſy and pleaſant. It is, in fact, nothing more than a gentle exerciſe of the mind. Hence he naturally examines every thing, that occurs to him,

with

with ſufficient attention and preciſion; and effectually guards againſt thoſe evils, in which a precipitate determination would have involved him.

Whoever admits the truth of divine revelation, muſt be conſcious, that it will derive great advantage from ſuch a preparation. Truth hath nothing to apprehend from the inveſtigation of a vigorous and penetrating mind, that is too active to acquieſce in the outward appearance of things, too cautious to truſt to an imperfect enquiry, and too diſcerning to be impoſed upon by ſophiſtry and artful devices. Thoſe qualities are formidable to impoſture of every kind, which can never acquire the conſiſtency and ſtrength of truth. It's weak parts will always be in danger of being diſcovered by an accurate examination; and the incoherences

and abſurdities inſeparable from it's nature, however artfully they may be veiled over, cannot fail of being expoſed, ſome time or other, by the efforts of a mind, rendered active and vigorous by habitual exerçiſe.

It is the glory of Chriſtianity, that it was propagated by the unſkilful, and embraced by the wiſe. In vain did wit and eloquence aſſail it: in vain did philoſophy attempt to undermine it's foundations. The conflict always terminated to the advantage of our holy religion. The wit, perhaps, continued profane; and the ſophiſt, who had nothing in view but the diſplay of his ingenuity, perſevered in his war of words; but the true philoſopher, whoſe great object was the diſcovery of truth, found it, often unexpectedly found it, in the ſacred volume

of

of God's word, and embraced it with reverence and gratitude.

Thus did Chriſtianity gradually diffuſe itſelf over thoſe parts of the world, that had been previouſly enlightened by philoſophy. Thoſe men, whoſe minds had been trained to the inveſtigation of truth, who had learned by habitual exerciſe to diſcern, where the real ſtrength of an argument lay, and who had been diſciplined to the detection of error and the confutation of ſophiſtry, clearly perceived the divinity of it's origin, received it with ſincerity, and retained it at the hazard of their lives. In this train did things proceed, in ſpite of oppreſſions and perſecutions; till a Chriſtian and a civilized being became almoſt ſynonimous terms.

The converſion of the barbarous nations

of Europe preſents us with a very different aſpect. They were equally incapable of diſcerning the intrinſic excellence of our religion, and of comprehending the evidence, upon which the proof of it's truth was built. It was in vain, that their reaſon was appealed to. They knew not, how to enter upon, or conduct, a regular inveſtigation of the ſubject. Thoſe, who paſſed their own borders, and engaged in excurſions, in order to procure more comfortable habitations in the milder and more cultivated regions of the ſouth, ſoon embraced the religion of the nations, among whom they ſettled. But their converſion was never produced by rational conviction. They generally commenced Chriſtians, without being acquainted with the firſt principles of Chriſtianity. They were induced to it, either by the grant of ſome deſirable territory;

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by the offer of ſome honourable and beneficial alliances, that promiſed them ſecurity in the lands, which they had ſeized; or by ſome other obvious temporal conſideration. Thoſe, who continued in their native woods, were baptized in later times, by the command of invaders at the head of victorious armies. But ſeveral generations paſſed away; before either of thoſe deſcriptions of men could be brought fully to comprehend the nature of the religion, which they outwardly profeſſed, and to accept it in it's genuine purity. Indeed this could never be completely effected; till their minds were tinctured by philoſophy, and their faculties ſtrengthened, and enlarged, by a habit of inveſtigation.

Another advantage, reſulting to divine revelation from the ſtudy of philoſophy,

is, that it purifies and refines the affections and ſentiments.—Nothing has tended more to retard the progreſs of Chriſtianity, than the corruptions of the human heart. When the affections are properly inclined, comparatively little light is ſufficient to direct the underſtanding to the knowledge of divine truth. But he, who is averſe from ſpeculation, becomes too often a prey to ſenſuality. Pleaſure and diſſipation are ever ready to engage the mind, that is not previouſly occupied by ſerious purſuits. Hence a formidable oppoſition is raiſed againſt the reception of divine revelation. The diſcoveries, which it makes, and the precepts, which it inculcates, are all hoſtile to an indiſcriminate indulgence in pleaſure. Men, therefore, immerſed in ſenſe, will very reluctantly admit the authority of that religion, which ſtrikes

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at the root of their enjoyments, and debars them of their habitual gratifications. They will exert their utmoſt endeavours to ſilence it's appeals to their conſcience, and to evade and quibble with it's evidence. Nothing, but the moſt awakening calls of providence, or the moſt inconteſtable proofs, can prevail upon them to admit the truth of that ſyſtem of duty, which they ardently wiſh to be falſe. But much of this difficulty is removed by a habit of ſpeculation. The true philoſopher is ſeldom or never a man of enormous vices. Diſſipation and reflection, ſenſuality and abſtraction, are ſcarcely compatible with each other. Wit and genius often enliſt under the banners of vice, and diffuſe an artificial luſtre around it. But the purſuit of true philoſophy naturally leads to the practice of virtue. When the mind is engaged in examining the

the ſecret operations of nature, in aſcertaining the laws by which it acts, or in deviſing the moſt effectual methods of acquiring ſome other important truths; the whole man is occupied in the work, and has little reliſh for the gratifications of the ſenſes. This moderation and ſimplicity of a true philoſopher are ſo generally acknowledged, as to have been not unfrequently the object of ridicule. It is no part of the preſent undertaking to enter upon a *general* defence of philoſophy; otherwiſe, it would be eaſy to make it appear, that it is greatly conducive to all the valuable purpoſes of life. It is ſufficient, in this place, to ſhew, that it has no tendency to undermine divine revelation; on the contrary, that it prepares the minds of men for the eaſy reception of it, by quieting, and in a manner extirpating, thoſe unruly paſſions, which make

make them averſe from the reſtraints and diſcipline of the Goſpel. St. Paul declares, that, " if the Goſpel be hid, it is hid to " them, that are loſt; in whom the God " of this world hath blinded the eyes of " them, which believe not, leſt the light " of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is " the image of God, ſhould ſhine upon " them." 2 Cor. iv. 3. 4. Philoſophy then, which withdraws men from the influence of the God of this world, is indiſputably a friend of the Goſpel. While it induces men to delight in retirement and reflection, and to ſhun the temptations to ſin: while it renders them chaſte, temperate, and content with a little; it removes much of that prejudice, which the pure doctrines of the Goſpel are apt to create in worldly minds; and diſpoſes them to attend, at leaſt with impartiality,

to

to that awful diſplay of evidence, with which the everlaſting God has vouchſafed to uſher in this concluding diſpenſation of his grace and mercy.

III. Let us, in the third place, conſider, whether the actual poſſeſſion of knowledge has any tendency to undermine divine revelation.

The mind of man is originally void of all traces of knowledge. Whatever it afterwards poſſeſſes, is acquired by either obſervation or ſtudy. If this knowledge has a real tendency to undermine divine revelation, and to introduce ſcepticiſm or infidelity; it becomes an important duty to guard with jealous care againſt it's admiſſion into the mind. In this caſe, either total ignorance is moſt favourable to the intereſt of divine revelation; or there is a certain

a certain limit, within which the acquiſition of knowledge is innocent, but al excurſions beyond it are attended with imminent hazard, if not with the certain deſtruction of our faith. I will not argue upon the firſt ſuppoſition. The common ſenſe of mankind is decidedly againſt it. The care, which the beſt of men, and all men of reflection, beſtow upon the education of their children and the culture of their minds, is an inconteſtable indication, that they do not think every degree of knowledge ſubverſive of Chriſtianity.

If, ſecondly, any degree of it be chargeable with this effect; it becomes us with the utmoſt precaution to determine preciſely, where we are to fix the boundaries between valuable and pernicious knowledge in the progreſſive improvement of the mind. People, who have not conſidered

ſidered the ſubject with attention, will be ready to reply, that the diſtinction between philoſophy and the common knowledge of mankind is ſufficiently obvious for the practical purpoſes of life. But if the effects of philoſophy were indeed ſuch, as have been ſuppoſed; this diſtinction would ſoon be found, by fatal experience, to be too vague and indeterminate. The boundary between common knowledge, and that higher ſpecies of it, which aſſumes the title of philoſophy, is not ſo fixed, as ſome men are ready to imagine. That title is not applied to any abſolute determinate quantity of knowledge, but to the relative diffuſion of it in particular countries and among particular deſcriptions of men, and to the method, in which it is acquired. Two men may have an equal right to the denomination of philoſophers, and yet, on account of

the diverſity of their ſituations, differ very widely from each other in the extent of their knowledge. Sir Iſaac Newton ſaw much farther into the conſtitution of nature than Pythagoras; yet the world has, with great reaſon, denominated them both great philoſophers. But we may venture to aſſert farther, that many, in this enlightened age, are content to wave their claim to the title of philoſophers entirely, who far ſurpaſs Empedocles, Athenagoras, and Anaxagoras, the great boaſts of early antiquity, in clear and actual knowledge.

In fact, philoſophers are but the forerunners of mankind in ſcience; and let the boundary of their province be fixed, where it may, the herd of mankind will probably in time overleap it. The truths, which the former diſcover by ſevere inveſtigation,

veſtigation, they deliver over to others of a leſs abſtracted genius. Theſe arrange them in perſpicuous order, clothe them in popular language, illuſtrate them by familiar alluſions, and, by ſuiting them, in all reſpects, to the taſte and apprehenſion of the people, procure for them an eaſy and a general reception. Thus, what in one age required the utmoſt efforts of genius to diſcover, and was not even underſtood but by men of uncommon acuteneſs and penetration, ſpreads imperceptibly through the bulk of mankind, and at length becomes ſo familiar to the meaneſt capacities, as to be taken, by common obſervers, for a dictate of nature.

If knowledge were, in it's own nature, deſtructive of Chriſtianity; the proſpect, which this view of things affords us, of it's progreſſive diffuſion would be truly lamentable.

lamentable. Inſtead of thoſe glorious times, to which the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Teſtament direct our attention, when the earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſeas; and when the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of God and of his Chriſt; we might expect to ſee men proceed gradually, as the world improves in ſcience, from ſlight indications of ſcepticiſm to an abſolute and univerſal rejection of all divine truth.

Philoſophy is repreſented by ſome, as producing an arrogance, which makes men prone to reject the poſitive declarations of the Deity. Philoſophers are ſuppoſed to be ſo elated with the opinion, which they entertain, of the extent of their own knowledge, that they admit

of nothing as credible, which they do not fully comprehend. They, by whom this objection is urged, evidently ſhew by it, that they have no conception of the mind and ſpirit of a true philoſopher. He, who has ſearched into the nature of things with the greateſt attention, is moſt deeply ſenſible of his own ignorance, and moſt readily inclined to diſtruſt the certainty of his own concluſions. It is ignorance, that is ever moſt attended by preſumption. The ignorant man ſees no more, than is immediately preſented to his ſenſes; yet he fancies, that he underſtands the whole of the ſubject. He miſtakes words for ideas, and accidental for neceſſary effects; and forms analogies between things, that are widely and eſſentially different from each other both in their nature and in their circumſtances. From this circumſcribed and imperfect view of things he

he draws the moſt unwarrantable concluſions; and, having raſhly conceived opinions, that have no foundation but in his own imagination, he retains them with the moſt invincible obſtinacy. The apprehenſion of a ſingle difficulty is ſufficient to fill his mind; and he rejects a doctrine, replete with wiſdom and goodneſs; merely becauſe it ſeems repugnant, in ſome particular inſtance, to his preconceived opinions.

But it is the buſineſs of a true philoſopher to endeavour to acquire clear ideas of things, and to diſtinguiſh between what is certain, what is probable, and what is doubtful. In the proſecution of this deſign, he is led to aſcertain the compaſs of his faculties, and the extent of his actual and poſſible knowledge. The reſult of this enquiry, when conducted

with candour, is always ſufficiently mortifying to human vanity to check that arrogance and ſelf-conceit, which a ſuperficial knowledge of the moſt obvious of the operations of nature is apt to excite in weak minds. The philoſopher is very ſenſible of the infinite hazard of applying rules and maxims, collected from obſervations made upon one ſubject, to controvert poſitions relative to another, that appears to have little or no affinity to it in the circumſtances under conſideration. He knows, that a man would be guilty of the groſſeſt abſurdity, who ſhould attempt to diſpute againſt the phenomena of magnetiſm and electricity, becauſe they do not accord with the laws of gravity. If, therefore, he has competent evidence of the truth of the *fact*; he will not be much inclined to cavil with the *doctrines* of revelation, becauſe they

do

do not agree with his principles and preconceived opinions. God is eſſentially different from every other being; and it neceſſarily follows from his infinite perfections, that there muſt be many things relating to his nature, his will, and his diſpoſal of circumſtances and events, which we could never diſcover by the ſtrength of our own reaſon, and which we can comprehend no farther, than he thinks fit to diſplay them to us. Every analogy, formed from the nature of inferior beings, muſt very inadequately repreſent that infinite ſource of perfection, in whom, and to whom, and through whom are all things. As he is omniſcient; he can contrive arrangements, far ſurpaſſing our comprehenſion, and contrary to our moſt uniform experience. As he is almighty; he can, with the utmoſt facility, execute every plan, that his wiſdom may ſuggeſt.

But beſides all this, the philoſopher perceives inſuperable difficulties in the moſt common objects, of which, he imagined, he had an adequate knowledge; and is reduced to the neceſſity of reſolving almoſt every thing in the creation into the appointment of the creator. Hence he will be ſtill leſs diſpoſed to ſet up his limited underſtanding, as the unerring rule of what is right and fitting, and to meaſure infinite wiſdom by ſo defective a ſtandard.—Whoever rejects the diſcoveries of the Goſpel, becauſe they ſurpaſs his comprehenſion, manifeſts a very great ignorance of the nature and ſtate of all the knowledge, that we poſſeſs, whether it be philoſophical or religious, natural or revealed. The true philoſopher is very ſenſible of the difficulties attending the doctrine of the reſurrection of the body. But he is far from thinking thoſe difficulties

ties a ſufficient ground for rejecting the doctrine itſelf. He finds himſelf equally incapable of accounting for the firſt formation of our bodies, of their growth, of the manner, in which they receive their nouriſhment, or even of diſcovering that ſecret power, by which their ſeveral parts, and the minute but ſeparate particles of each, are held together. Having ſufficient evidence of the reality of the things themſelves, he readily embraces them as truths; notwithſtanding his incapacity to underſtand the manner, in which they are accompliſhed.

We cannot be too careful in examining the authority, upon which a religion, that profeſſes to be of divine origin, claims our aſſent; for eternal life is of too much conſequence to be hazarded upon a negligent enquiry. But when a true phi-

loſopher has ſufficient reaſon to believe, that the doctrine is of God; he will think, that he has nothing more to do, but to endeavour to underſtand it in it's genuine ſenſe.—While philoſophy thus corrects all arrogant pretenſions to univerſal knowledge, and, by making a man ſenſible of the limited ſtate of his faculties, withdraws his attention from the nature of things to the reality of facts; the doctrines of the Goſpel are placed upon their true baſis, and will, I truſt, ever be found to be attended with ſufficient evidence to eſtabliſh rational conviction.

While the philoſophic mind is humbled by the inſcrutable nature of the eſſence of things; it receives another very ſevere check, when it proceeds farther to contemplate the arrangements of them, and to inveſtigate the ends, for the accompliſhment

compliſhment of which thoſe arrangements were formed.

There is nothing to be found in nature ſingle and unconnected. Whatever now exiſts, owed the beginning of it's exiſtence to ſome precedent cauſes; is preſerved, and modified in it's being, by the operation of things co-exiſtent with it; and will act, and be acted upon, by a variety of ſurrounding objects, at it's diſſolution. The man, whoſe view of things has not been enlarged by philoſophy, is able to trace this connexion but a very little way; and when he has got to the limit of his capacity, he perſuades himſelf, that he is advanced as far, as the operation of cauſe and effect extends. But the true philoſopher, whoſe proſpect is enlarged by ſcience, perceives, that this connexion branches out in all poſſible directions; that

that a general and mutual dependence appears to be eſtabliſhed in nature; and that the production of events is often diſcovered, upon minute examination, to depend upon circumſtances, apparently the moſt adverſe. The improvement of philoſophy, by the diſcovery of new and hitherto unheard of branches of this connexion, teaches us to be very modeſt in our deciſions; when every ſtep, that we take, not only enlarges, but varies, the proſpect, and often ſhews thoſe things to be fit and proper, harmonious and beautiful, which we once conſidered as rude and deformed.—Indeed, nothing can be conceived better calculated to repreſs arrogance and temerity, than the conviction, which philoſophy affords, that all the works of nature, which are ſubject to our inſpection, are parts of an immenſe ſyſtem, a very inconſiderable portion of which is

expoſed

expoſed to our ſcrutiny; and that there is ſcarcely any thing in the whole compaſs of nature ſo ſimple or inſignificant, that all it's relations and correſpondences can be diſcovered by the moſt penetrating genius.

It would be very weak and abſurd in any one to pretend to determine upon the propriety of a part of a machine; unleſs he had a complete idea both of the intention of the machine itſelf, and of the influence of the ſeveral parts upon each other. He, who ſuppoſes, that any part influences that only, which is in immediate contact with it, and that to effect that influence is the ſole object of it, will in all probability be very dogmatical and very ignorant in his determinations reſpecting it. But when he is ſhewn, that the machine is conſtructed in ſuch a manner,

manner, that the moſt diſtant parts of it have a mutual dependence upon each other, which he is not yet capable of fully comprehending; and that the deſign of the machine is not even confined to the due performance of it's own functions, but is intended to be rendered inſtrumental to the operations of other things, external to itſelf, of which he is equally ignorant;—he will ſoon learn to think with diffidence upon ſo intricate a ſubject. How much more, then, will the philoſopher be affected, who contemplates the ſyſtem of nature, conſiſting of an infinite variety of parts, each connected with and influencing the other in an inconceivable diverſity of ways? With what humility will he bow at the footſtool of the author of the univerſe; when he perceives, that he is unable, with all his knowledge, to comprehend completely the whole

whole deſign of the meaneſt of his works!

The ſyſtematic appearance, which every thing in nature bears, will lead the true philoſopher to expect a ſimilar arrangement, connexion, and dependence of parts, in a revelation proceeding from the ſame divine original. This will effectually prevent him from being offended at many ſeeming incongruities, which are conſidered as inſurmountable objections by leſs cultivated minds. He perceives, that, in the regular and ordinary conduct of the natural world, the Deity accompliſhes no ends without means, and that many circumſtances and events, far from being deſirable, nay even offenſive in themſelves, are permitted to take place, on account of ſome beneficial effects, to the production of which they are neceſſary. When, therefore,

therefore, he finds any thing contrary to his expectation in a ſyſtem of religion, that bears the plain marks of a divine original; his knowledge of the myſterious operations of nature withholds him from raſhly condemning that diſpoſition of things, upon which he very probably is not qualified to decide. As he is conſcious, that he cannot diſcern all the relations and dependences of the circumſtance or event, which he diſapproves; he acquieſces in this reflection, that it may, for ought he knows, be a neceſſary bond of union, in a ſyſtem, which, conſidered in the whole, is infinitely wiſe and good.

Another objection, frequently urged againſt philoſophy, is, that, by confining the mind to the contemplation of ſecond cauſes, it is apt to withdraw it from the conſideration of God, the firſt cauſe of all

all things. If philoſophy, had really this effect; it would be ſubverſive not only of revealed, but alſo of natural religion: and, in truth, it is not unfrequently charged with both thoſe conſequences, but in each caſe with equal injuſtice. The operations of nature are undoubtedly carried on with the utmoſt regularity and order. In the ordinary courſe of things, every event is accompliſhed by means of ſecond cauſes. This may eaſily impoſe upon a ſuperficial obſerver, who has ſo confined a view of things, that he looks no farther for the cauſe of any effect, than to the inſtrument, that immediately produced it. But the true philoſopher perceives, that the courſe of nature could never have been eſtabliſhed without the interpoſition of ſome agent; and that the order and regularity of it prove, in the moſt ſatisfactory manner, the wiſdom and goodneſs of that

being,

being, who eſtabliſhed it. He obſerves, that what is not improperly denominated a cauſe, when taken in one point of view, is in another merely an effect; and that, without an acknowledgement of an original cauſe of all things, not one of the operations of nature can be ſatisfactorily explained. That, indeed, is the foundation of all true philoſophy; and if it ſhould be removed, the whole ſuperſtructure would be totally ſubverted. The philoſopher can proceed but a very little way in any direction, before he comes to this boundary of all his enquiries. While the ſcioliſt bewilders himſelf in the intricate mazes of ſecond cauſes, and talks, without meaning, of nature, fate, and chance; *he* diſcovers in every thing clear marks of the poſitive appointment, of the wiſe deſign, and benevolence of the Deity. By habitually referring every thing ultimately

mately to the fountain of wiſdom, and by continually meeting the creator, as it were, in every part of his works, a man acquires that frame of mind, which is of all others moſt favourable for the reception of religious impreſſions. Every object around him reminds him of the omnipotence and omnipreſence of God. Every thing that he ſees, hears, and feels, tells him in the moſt unequivocal language, that God originally produced, ſtill preſerves, and will finally diſpoſe of all things; that his paths are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out.

Thoſe, who wiſh to ſeparate religion from philoſophy, would make the former comparatively a very barren ſubject. All ſciences have a natural connexion, and tend to illuſtrate and advance each other. On which account it very ſeldom

happens, that one branch is found to flouriſh alone in any eminent degree. But the diſpenſations of nature and grace are ſo cloſely united, that it is little leſs than ſacrilege to tear them aſunder. They give the ſame repreſentations of the nature and attributes of God, ſuggeſt the ſame practical precepts, and are calculated to excite the ſame diſpoſitions in man. The expectations, hopes, and fears of the one are confirmed and eſtabliſhed by the other.

It is not unuſual, upon this ſubject, to controvert reaſoning with experience. We are told, that, among both nations and individuals, thoſe are moſt prone to infidelity, that have made the fartheſt advances in philoſophical knowledge.—If we ſhould allow, that philoſophy, by improving our faculties and giving us more enlarged

enlarged views of the works of God, tends to weaken the evidences of revelation; I repeat it, the conceſſion would operate more to the prejudice of revelation than of philoſophy. But if the fact be fairly ſtated; we ſhall find, that nothing is to be apprehended, in that point of view, on account of either divine revelation or true philoſophy.

In the preceding parts of this treatiſe, I have endeavoured to prove, that the natural tendency of true philoſophy is not to undermine, but to eſtabliſh, divine revelation: that the inveſtigation and knowledge of natural truth enlarge the capacity of the mind, and prepare it for the reception and right apprehenſion of the doctrines of Chriſtianity. But it does not follow from thence, that this tendency muſt neceſſarily and univerſally prevail.

The poſition is ſufficiently confirmed, if it does ſo generally, or even much oftener than the contrary. Thus, for inſtance, we cannot look into the world, without being convinced, that virtue has a tendency to promote our happineſs even in this life. But circumſtances ſometimes combine to eſtabliſh the reverſe of this in particular inſtances; and a man may be rendered miſerable, as far as his external ſituation can make him ſo, by ſtedfaſtly adhering to the pure principles of moral obligation. In like manner, philoſophy, the natural ally of revelation, may poſſibly, on ſome occaſions, be preſſed into the oppoſite ſervice of infidelity.

In countries, that are totally unenlightened by philoſophy, we certainly hear of the feweſt inſtances of defection from the eſtabliſhed religion. Men's minds

are in a ſtate of torpid inactivity, which induces them to acquieſce in the repreſentations, that are made to them. They are involved in ſuch intellectual darkneſs, that they are equally inſenſible of truth and falſhood. They do not, indeed, ſtep out of the beaten track of authorized opinions. But the reaſon is, that they are not able to ſee beyond the object, that is immediately preſented to them; and even that is ſo diſcoloured and diſtorted by the thickneſs of the medium, through which they view it, that it frequently retains little or nothing of it's native beauty and ſimplicity.

It may be confidently affirmed, that Chriſtianity was never planted in any uncultivated, or, in other words, unphiloſophical, country; where it was not groſsly corrupted, if left, unprotected, to

the apprehenſions and interpretations of the rude inhabitants. It will not be neceſſary, in this place, to except againſt a few congregations of Indians, who reſt their faith upon the authority of ſome enlightened miſſionaries. They are far from being examples, that militate againſt philoſophy; as the men, upon whoſe judgement the opinions of the whole ſociety ultimately depend, enjoy all the benefits of it's genial influence. But where philoſophy is totally neglected, men may indeed outwardly profeſs a belief of ſuch and ſuch doctrines. But their apprehenſion of thoſe doctrines is generally ſo confuſed, ſo inconſiſtent, and abſurd; and they add to them ſo many prophane fables and whimſical inventions; that the motley mixture may be denominated any thing, rather than Chriſtianity. Their profeſſion of the name, and their obſervance

of

of a few external rites, may perhaps facilitate their converſion to the truth. But they really ſtand in need of converſion, with reſpect to all the valuable purpoſes, for which the revelation was vouchſafed, almoſt as much as they, who never heard of the name of Chriſt.

The hiſtory of Europe is a ſufficient illuſtration of this matter. The ignorance of philoſophy, which was conſequent upon the irruptions of the barbarians of the north, was attended with an equal ignorance of the vital parts of Chriſtianity. Nor was the purity of our religion reſtored; till the revival of literature and the eſtabliſhment of ſound philoſophy prepared the minds of men for the reception of the truth, and enabled them to diſtinguiſh between the ſimple doctrines of the Goſpel, and that enor-

mous load of errors and abſurdities, to which, in the days of their ignorance, they had been ſubjected.

Indeed, the great buſineſs of philoſophy is to teach men to think; and it is very probable, that, in many caſes, they will think wrong. The evidences of revelation are not ſo overpowering, as neceſſarily to bring conviction to every mind. Prejudice may pervert, or paſſion ſuppreſs them. Even ſome honeſt and upright men may perhaps deviate from the right path. Yet this is no objection againſt our cultivating our underſtandings by philoſophical purſuits. The Deity thought proper to endue us with reaſon, that faculty, which diſtinguiſhes us from the brute creation; though he foreſaw, that we ſhould frequently abuſe it, and be ſome times miſled by it. Inſtinct, indeed,

deed, is regular, but it is the regularity of mechaniſm. The obedience of reaſon is an obedience flowing from the underſtanding and the heart, and, therefore, infinitely more pleaſing to a being of ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs. Philoſophy enlarges the ſphere of this obedience, by cultivating that reaſon, on which it is founded; and the man, thus improved, is as much ſuperior to the rude part of the human race, as they are to irrational animals; and may not improperly be conſidered as an intermediate link between his own ſpecies and that next above it in the ſcale of perfection.

Whoever will impartially conſider the ſubject in this light, will ſoon acknowledge, that rational religion, pure devotion, and genuine Chriſtianity, flouriſh no where ſo much, as in thoſe countries, where

where true philoſophy is cultivated. It diſperſes fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition, and introduces, in their place, juſt ſentiments of God and his providence: it ſubſtitutes conviction for profeſſion, the ſubmiſſion of the ſoul for the homage of the body.

That all, who are placed within the influence of philoſophy, do not make this uſe of it, may be a matter of concern to well-diſpoſed minds; but it can be no juſt reaſon, why we ſhould diſcourage the purſuit of it in others, or neglect it ourſelves. The benefits, that mankind derives from it, infinitely ſurpaſs the inconveniences; which is as much as can be ſaid of the greateſt advantages beſtowed upon us in this ſtate of trial: and the total neglect of it would be highly prejudicial, if not fatal, to our intellectual and religious attainments.

IV. Upon

IV. Upon this ſtate of the caſe, the queſtion naturally occurs: "Whence is "it, that a prejudice has ſubſiſted againſt "philoſophy, among ſome deſcriptions "of men, in almoſt every age of the "Chriſtian Church?"—For this many reaſons may be aſſigned, the principal of which I will briefly ſuggeſt in the remaining part of this treatiſe.

1. The plain and ſimple religion of Jeſus has given riſe to an infinite variety of ſects, all of whom have profeſſed to derive their tenets, though directly oppoſite to each other, from the ſame divine volume. The ſkilful and the ignorant, the learned and the unlearned, entered into the conteſt with equal ardour. When the fanatic interpretations of the latter were oppoſed by juſt criticiſm, ſound reaſoning, and perſpicuous deductions; the only

only expedient, that they could adopt, was to depreciate philoſophy, from which their adverſaries derived their ſuperiority. For this purpoſe, they eagerly laid hold of a paſſage in St. Paul's Epiſtle to the Coloſſians; without conſidering, what kind of philoſophy it was, the purſuit of which the Apoſtle wiſhed to diſcourage. It was that philoſophy, derived from the Eaſt, which had crept into the Church in that early period, corrupted the pure doctrines of Chriſtianity, and gave riſe to the moſt pernicious errors both moral and religious, practical and ſpeculative. The Apoſtle characterizes it by the terms *Vain Deceit*, and attributes it's origin to the invention and tradition of men. It had no foundation in nature, and could derive no ſupport from an inveſtigation of it's operations and laws. On the contrary, nothing could more effectually tend to evince

evince the abſurdity and impiety of the tenets, which it inculcated, than the ſtudy of that philoſophy, which it is the buſineſs of this treatiſe to recommend.

The ſame account is in ſome meaſure applicable to the philoſophy of Plato and Ariſtotle, which ſucceeded it in the Church. Whatever evils it produced, aroſe entirely from the wrong methods of philoſophiſing adopted in the ſchools of thoſe great maſters. If, inſtead of attending to the ſuggeſtions of a warm imagination, or truſting to abſtract ſpeculations, founded upon either arbitrary or partial principles, for the diſcovery of truth, they and their followers had condeſcended to conſult nature, to obſerve her operations, and inveſtigate her laws, and been content to approach the truth by a ſlow aſcent from particular diſcove-

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ries to more general principles; we ſhould have had no reaſon to complain of thoſe viſionary conceits on the one hand, which have raiſed no ſmall prejudice againſt Chriſtianity in the breaſts of rational enquirers; nor, on the other hand, of thoſe refined ſubtilties, which, by eſtabliſhing an imaginary creation, different from the creation of God, have puzzled all, miſled many, and at once ſpread an impenetrable gloom over nature and revelation *.

In

* The fundamental errors of the Academy and Lyceum ſeem to me to be well expreſſed in the following paſſages:

Ἡ ψυχὴ, ὅταν μὲν τῷ σώματι προσχρῆται εἰς τὸ σκοπεῖν τι, ἢ διὰ τῆ ὁρᾶν, ἢ διὰ τῆ ἀκυειῖν, ἢ δι ἀλλης τινος αἰσθήσεως (τῆτο γὰρ ἐςι τὸ διὰ τῆ σώματος, τὸ δι αἰσθήσεως σκοπεῖν τι.) τότε μὲν ἕλκεται ὑπὸ τῆ σώματος εἰς τὰ ἀδίποτε κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχοντα, κ) αὐτὴ πλανᾶται, κ) ταράτλεται, κ) ἰλιγγιᾶ, ὥσπερ μεθύσα, ἅτε τοιέτων ἐφαπτομένη. Πάνυ γε. Ὅταν δέγε αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν σκοπῇ, ἐκεισε ὶ ιχεται εἰς τὸ καθαρόν τε κ) ἀεί ον, κ) ἀθάνατον, κ) ὡσαύτως ἔχον. κ) ὡς συγγενὴς ἂσα αὐτῆ, ἀει μετ' ἐκείνε τε γίγνεται, ὅταν περ' αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν γένηται, κ) ἐξῇ αὐτῇ. κ) πέπαυταί τε τῆ πλάνυ, κ) περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἀει κατὰ ταυτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, ἅτε τοιέτων ἐφαπτομένη, κ) τῆτο

αὐτῆς

In all theſe caſes, it is neceſſary to affix a preciſe meaning to words. Falſe philoſophy neceſſarily leads to errors in the

αὐτῆς τὸ πάθημα, φρόνησις κέκληται. Plat. Φαιδ. p. 79. Serrani. Vid. etiam p. 65. 66. Ος ἂν μάλιστα, &c.

Μάλιστα ἐπιστητὰ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ αἴτια. Διὰ γὰρ ταῦτα, καὶ ἐκ τούτων τἆλλα γνωρίζεται, ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτα διὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων. Ariſt. Μεταφυς. B. α. K. β.

Plato affirms, that the mind is then moſt capable of arriving at a perfect knowledge of things; when it withdraws from all communication with the body, and from the influence of the ſenſes, which providence has appointed as the inlets of all our knowledge; and, having retired within itſelf, employs only pure intellect in the purſuit of it's objects.—Ariſtotle lays it down as a maxim, that the knowledge of effects is to be derived from their cauſes, and not that of cauſes from their effects. Many ages paſſed away, before mankind diſcovered the falſhood of theſe poſitions.—" Upon theſe intellectualiſts," ſays Lord Chancellor Bacon, " which are, notwithſtanding, " commonly taken for the moſt ſublime and divine phi- " loſophers, Heraclitus gave a juſt cenſure, ſaying, " *Men ſought truth in their own little worlds, and not in the* " *great common world*; for they diſdained to ſpell, and ſo " by degrees to read in the volume of God's works; and " contrariwiſe, by continual meditation and agitation " of wit, do urge and as it were invocate their own " ſpirits to divine and give oracles unto them, whereby " they are deſervedly deluded."

Bacon on the Advancement of Learning.

knowledge

knowledge of nature. Thoſe errors, by being implicitly embraced, may create prejudices againſt divine revelation, which will always be found inconſiſtent with them. But the ſtudy of true philoſophy will be the moſt effectual means of correcting thoſe errors, and of re-eſtabliſhing the injured reputation of revelation.

2. The fondneſs, which ſome men of the preſent age have diſcovered for abſtract ſpeculations, unſupported by fact, and the uſes, which they have made of them, have been no little detriment to the credit of philoſophy. The tendency, which they have, to involve every thing in doubt gives this captious and perplexed philoſophy (if indeed it be worthy of that name) an appearance of great profundity and acuteneſs. Wonderfully fine indeed are the thin cobwebs of ſophiſtry, that

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are ſpun by theſe ingenious men. But they are of too flimſy a texture to bear the examination of true philoſophy. Of this there cannot be a ſtronger proof, than what is furniſhed by a late eminent * proficient in this art. He was deeply ſkilled in all the myſteries of it, and is very clear from any ſuſpicion of deſiring to depreciate it. Yet he has confeſſed and proved, that the principles, which led him to deny the divine origin of Chriſtianity, would equally lead him to unhinge the whole fabric of nature, and to controvert the plaineſt concluſions of reaſon and common ſenſe. It is not to philoſophy, but to a want of it, that theſe extravagances are to be attributed. True philoſophy would teach men more modeſty and ſobriety, would furniſh them with more

* David Hume.

ſolid principles, and conduct them to the truth by a different train of reaſoning. Of this they appear not to be ignorant. Otherwiſe they would not take ſo much pains to overthrow, at the ſame time, the plaineſt dictates of reaſon and the doctrines of revelation.—If philoſophy conſiſt, in any ſenſe, in the knowledge of truth; it is evident, that they, whoſe principles tend to ſubvert all knowledge and to confound truth and falſhood, can have no claim to the title of philoſophers: though they be ready on moſt occaſions to inſinuate, that they alone have a right to ſo diſtinguiſhed an appellation.

3. The example of ſome men of very lively parts has contributed much to propagate the notion, that philoſophy and revelation are inconſiſtent with each other. Having juſt information enough to perceive

ceive difficulties in the great ſcheme of religion, without patience to ſearch for, or learning and judgement to diſcover and apprehend, the true ſolution of the matter, they are hurried away by the volatility of their genius, and raſhly conclude thoſe things to be falſe, the full force of which they do not immediately perceive; and, as vanity is the predominant paſſion of their hearts, they make no ſcruple to exert all the powers of their wit to enforce thoſe objections, which more cautious and ingenuous enquirers perceive to be founded in miſapprehenſion, and to owe the whole of their ſtrength to a partial repreſentation. Yet ſuch is the brilliancy, that wit imparts to every thing, which it touches; that, when the advocates of thoſe men affect to attribute their ſingular opinions to the extent of their knowledge and the acuteneſs of their reaſoning, the

friends of revelation are too apt to admit the fact; and philoſophy is ſtigmatized with charges the moſt foreign from it's nature.

4. Somewhat different from theſe are the * men, who, ſetting up for philoſophers without knowledge, adopt opinions without judgement, and defend them without ſkill. Their preſumption is proportionate to their ignorance and inexperience. But when they have been obliged to relinquiſh one darling opinion and then an other, their confidence gradually abates; till at length, having been ſucceſſively driven out of what they had been uſed to regard as their ſtrongeſt holds, they give up all enquiry in deſpair, and, taking refuge in a general ſcepticiſm,

* Vid. Plat. Φαιδ. p. 89. Serrani.

perſuade

perſuade themſelves, that every thing is equally diſputable and uncertain.

5. Among the many deſcriptions of men, to whom the name of philoſopher is vaguely attributed; there are ſome, the object of whoſe purſuits is not to diſcover, what is true, and firmly to adhere to and maintain it; but merely to learn, what different opinions have been entertained upon the ſame ſubject, and by what arguments they have been ſupported. Theſe men, by occaſionally defending either ſide of a queſtion, acquire great dexterity in diſputation, and are acquainted with all the arts, by which the weakeſt cauſe may be made to appear plauſible. While they nicely balance the reaſons on both ſides; they are allowed to have a great inſight into the ſubject, and their claim to extreme candour is readily admitted. But

the knowledge of quibbles and verbal evaſions, of perverted arguments and miſſtated objections, is not the knowledge, which true philoſophy is intended to promote; nor is an indifference to truth and falſhood the candour, which it recommends. It is with great injuſtice, therefore, that it is made accountable for that fluctuation of opinion and that doubt and heſitation upon all ſubjects, which are the natural conſequences of ſuch proceedings.

The cauſes, hitherto mentioned, why philoſophy and revelation have been ſuppoſed to be inconſiſtent with each other, have all of them one circumſtance in common, viz. that the term philoſophy has been improperly applied, and made to ſignify ſome thing contrary to it's nature. But other cauſes may be aſſigned, where

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this is not actually the caſe, and where true philoſophy ſome times is, but much oftener is ſuppoſed to be, the cauſe of infidelity.

1. At the revival of literature, when true philoſophy began to be cultivated; men were for a while ſurpriſed at their own diſcoveries. They ſeemed like beings emerging from darkneſs, and were introduced, as it were, into a new creation. Few ſeemed to perceive clearly, to what theſe diſcoveries would lead, and where they would end. Some indeed were wiſe enough to avail themſelves of the ſudden illumination, without being dazzled by the ſplendor, that broke in upon them on all ſides. They entered upon an impartial examination, without anticipating their diſcoveries. They laid aſide their prejudices, as ſoon as they were convinced,

that they were ſuch; but they condemned none of their former opinions, without a fair hearing and full proof. But there were many daring ſpirits, who were ſtrangers to this diſcretion and circumſpection. Finding ſome things falſe, which they had once embraced as indiſputable truths, they were prepared to queſtion every thing, that ſeemed to be at all connected with their former errors. Upon this principle, when they found any thing unphiloſophical in the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of faith; inſtead of endeavouring to ſeparate the truth from the falſhood, they raſhly condemned the whole. Men, who were ſincerely attached to their religion, were alarmed at thoſe conſequences of free enquiry, and were ſtrenuous in their oppoſition to what ſeemed to ſtrike at the root of Chriſtianity. But this evil was of ſmall extent and of ſhort duration.

It owed it's origin to the peculiar circumſtances of the times; and was, in a great meaſure, diſſipated by the progreſs of that philoſophy, the firſt dawning of which had called it forth. The prejudice however, which ſprung from hence, probably ſtill continues; though the cauſe has in amanner ceaſed to exiſt.

2. This precipitancy of a few of the early votaries of philoſophy has given great advantage to the advocates of prevailing ſuperſtitions. True philoſophy is ever an enemy to arbitrary reſtrictions. It promotes and cheriſhes, upon all ſubjects, that ſpirit of free but temperate enquiry, which alone can ſecure it's own proſperity. Men, who have been uſed to reaſon without prejudice upon all other ſubjects, feel themſelves in a great meaſure unſhackled by merely human authority, when

when they enter upon religious enquiries. This unbiaſſed ſtate of mind will ſome times prevent them from aſſenting implicitly to propoſitions, that are embraced without ſcruple by the herd of mankind.

It is a truth too notorious to be denied, that men, in forming ſyſtems of religion, are not always ſufficiently careful to confine their enquiries and deciſions to ſuch points, as are placed within the reach of their capacities. When they have applied appropriate terms and invented verbal diſtinctions; they fancy, that their buſineſs is done. Furniſhed with an inexhauſtible ſtore of theſe inſtruments of diſputation, they enter with confidence upon an inveſtigation of the unſearchable ways of God, and pretend to explain the deepeſt myſteries of revelation with all the raſh dexterity of wit. But the preciſion,

ciſion, which is habitual to the true philoſopher in all his reſearches, will preven him from being impoſed upon by the uſe of words, however ſpeciouſly they may be applied, to which no determinate meaning is or can be annexed. He will ſoon diſcover, that the explanation is involved in all the obſcurity, which originally ſurrounded the ſubject intended to be illuſtrated by it. His knowledge of the limited extent of his own underſtanding and of the infinite perfections of the Deity will even deter him from ſpeculating upon many ſubjects, which others, who are ſtrangers to the modeſt diffidence, that philoſophy has a natural tendency to inſpire, heſitate not to deſcribe with all the minute particularity, with which they would ſpeak of the commoneſt objects, that are ſubject to the daily examination of their ſenſes. He does not preſume to

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be wiſe above what is written; but contents himſelf with the general information, that the Scriptures afford him. He repoſes, with confidence, in the goodneſs of his maker, and waits, without repining, for a ſolution of all his doubts, till that day, when he ſhall ſee God as he is, and know, even as alſo he is known. But this conduct will not ſatisfy thoſe, whoſe general confuſion of ideas conceals from them their own temerity, and renders them incapable of a rational conviction. They proclaim him a philoſophic ſceptic; becauſe he dare not form a preciſe and determinate opinion upon ſubjects, which he cannot underſtand.

But if a mere ſuſpenſion of judgement upon the niceſt and moſt intricate topics be ſufficient to incur the cenſure of the dogmatiſt; a decided difference of opinion will

will be productive of ſtill more powerful effects. As ſoon as a man of this kind touches upon the reigning errrors, and endeavours to vindicate Chriſtianity from ſome of the corruptions, which it acquired in the times, when true philoſophy was baniſhed from the world; his antagoniſts, finding themſelves unable to maintain their ground by ſtrength of argument, relinquiſh the point in debate, and attack his perſonal character. Inſtead of endeavouring to prove the truth of their tenets by quotations from Scripture and by legitimate reaſoning; they raiſe an unjuſt clamour againſt a man, who has probably nothing ſo much at heart, as the propagation of the pure doctrines of Chriſt. They load him with conſequences, not fairly deducible from what he has advanced; and charge him with hoſtile intentions againſt the whole

ſyſtem of revelation, notwithſtanding his moſt ſolemn aſſurances to the contrary. By this kind of treatment, many ingenious men and pious Chriſtians have unjuſtly laboured under the reproach of infidelity, and have been the innocent cauſes of bringing a temporary diſgrace upon that philoſophy, which they had called in to the aid of truth.

3. It is not to be wondered at, if in ſuch a caſe a man ſhould be irritated by an abſurd, unmerited, and obſtinate oppoſition; and, during the heat of the conteſt, ſhould be driven into ſome unguarded aſſertions, that may ſeem to juſtify the allegations of his enemies.

But this is not the worſt of the caſe; for many a man, ſound in the faith, has unfortunately relinquiſhed it article by

by article, not led into error by ſpeculative refinements and the dictates of philoſophy, but forced from the truth by the violence of it's deluded friends. It often happens, that, while a man is eager in the defence of a poſition, of the truth of which he is thoroughly convinced, he is not ſufficiently guarded in admitting the conſequences, which his adverſaries deduce from it. When they have gained the ſlighteſt advantage over him by an unwary conceſſion on his part, they proceed to the conſequences of conſequences; till he, who engaged in the controverſy a good Chriſtian, finds himſelf entangled in a long chain of deductions, from which he knows not how to extricate himſelf, without either renouncing his faith, or acknowledging the error of his original aſſertion. Thoſe, who are acquainted with the pertinacity of the human mind

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and the zeal of diſputants, will perceive, that there is too much reaſon, in theſe circumſtances, to fear for the cauſe of revelation.

4. The addreſs of the champions of infidelity co-operates with the indiſcretion of ſuch miſtaken friends of Chriſtianity, in propagating the opinion, that philoſophy and revelation are inconſiſtent with each other. They are ſenſible, that the apparent concurrence of men of real ſcience will reflect the greateſt credit upon their tenets, and give them much weight in the apprehenſions of the generality of mankind. Unlike, therefore, the bigotted profeſſors of our holy religion, they catch at every ſentiment and expreſſion, that ſeems to favour their way of thinking; and turn it a thouſand ways, in order to perſuade the world, that their princi-

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ples and mode of reaſoning are ſupported by the authority of men of the moſt enlarged minds, and conſequently, that they are the reſult of cool, deliberate, and impartial enquiry.

The ſituation of great, perhaps of the greateſt, philoſophers has often been extremely diſtreſſing in this reſpect. While their hearts are warmed with the pureſt zeal for the propagation of Chriſtianity, and they ſtand forth in it's defence againſt it's falſe friends and it's avowed enemies; they are branded with the character of Apoſtates, and attacked with the utmoſt malevolence by thoſe very people, whoſe cauſe they are defending. The men, on the contrary, whoſe principles they deteſt, and whoſe reaſonings they deſpiſe, affect to treat them as their beſt friends, claim the ſanction of their au-

thority, and court them with all the arts of adulation. It is in vain, that they contradict the infinuations or aſſertions of both parties with indignation and abhorrence, and avow their real principles. By the one their conduct is attributed to hypocriſy, by the other to caution; and the world in general, either not able, or not inclined, to examine into thoſe things themſelves, without heſitation credit a report, which men of ſuch oppoſite intereſts and opinions are agreed in propagating.

If no other reaſon could be aſſigned for the prevalence of the opinion, that philoſophy has a tendency to undermine divine revelation; this alone, I think, would be equal to the purpoſe: particularly if we bear in mind the acknowledged imperfection of our nature, even in a philoſopher.

philoſopher. Unreaſonable cavils, vexatious attacks, and malevolent perſecutions on one hand, added to an inſidious attention, and an apparently liberal interpretation of words and actions on the other, may ſome times, in an ill-omened hour, ſuppreſs all the tendencies of true philoſophy; give him a diſtaſte to the opinions of thoſe; from whom he has received ſuch unjuſt treatment; and attach him to that party, by whom his friendſhip is courted, and his authority reſpected. One ſuch inſtance of defection from the faith adds ſtrength to the accuſations, that have been urged againſt philoſophers in general; and philoſophy is ſtigmatized with being an enemy to revelation, merely becauſe it could not protect the mind againſt the approaches of infidelity in every poſſible combination of circumſtances.

FINIS.